

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT NEBRASKA

Contact: Denise Brosius-Meeks, Business and Community Program Director
USDA Rural Development
Lincoln, Nebraska
(402) 437-5559

Education and Technical Assistance Available to Producers

Lincoln, December 28, 2001--Producers desiring to start a cooperative or related type of group venture along with those value-added cooperatives already in operation will benefit from a recent USDA Rural Development grant funding of \$290,576. These funds will be used by the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center (NCDC) to provide producers with education and technical assistance in areas of business startup, marketing and managing, and value-added production.

The USDA Rural Development awarded the grant monies to the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) for the benefit of the NCDC, a Foundation affiliated fund. The competitive USDA grant funds are targeted for cooperative development in rural Nebraska. Rural is defined as those communities with a population of less than 50,000.

The overall objective of this project is to provide a variety of support services to cooperative groups and related types of group business ventures. The NCDC is prepared to help these groups secure legal assistance and undertake feasibility studies, market analysis, and financial and business planning. Other types of assistance and services include educational programs for the group members and facilitating the sharing of information, experiences and "best practices" among the various groups in Nebraska working on different value-added projects. Finally, resources are available to help support Nebraska's unique First Responder Network. This statewide network includes professionals from various agencies and organizations who are working with the various cooperatives, value-added groups and related types of business groups that are emerging across the state. Sam Cordes, NCDC Director, Jo Lowe, NCDC Technical Assistance Coordinator, along with Jim Crandall, NCDC Cooperative Specialist; and 29 certified First Responders will carry out the work.

The state's overall economy will prosper from this project as the NCDC assists individual producers or processors to form coops, marketing alliances, and related types of group ventures. As more new cooperatives are developed and networking increases, the number of small producers or processors will grow, opening up the door to a wider, larger market arena. Growth will be stimulated in rural areas through new and expanded businesses; creating a need to learn and to receive assistance and training.

Total budget cost for this project is \$1,348,936, with USDA Rural Development providing \$290,576. The balance of needed funds will be derived from outside financial sources. In fiscal year 1998, the NCF received a \$148,000 USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant for the benefit of the NCDC.

Further information regarding the project and how to request assistance can be obtained by contacting the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center's toll free number, 1-877-496-5235. You may also contact Jim Crandall, Nebraska Cooperative Development Center at (308) 995-3889; 11854 730 Road Holdrege, Nebraska 68949; email crandallj3@unl.edu.

The cooperative development project was selected through the USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) program, which is administered by the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, an agency within USDA Rural Development. The grant program's mission is to facilitate the creation or retention of jobs in rural areas through the development of new rural cooperatives, value-added processing and rural businesses.

For additional information on the USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant program, contact Denise Brosius-Meeks, business and community program director in the USDA Rural Development State Office at (402) 437-5559 or Rm. 152 Federal Building 100 Centennial Mall North Lincoln, Nebraska 68508.

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USDA Rural Development is an Equal Opportunity Lender, Provider and Employer. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to USDA, Director, OCR, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410.

ABBREVIATED FORMAT FOLLOWS:

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